UbD/DI Reflections

Chapter 1

A specific part that stood out to me was on page 6 when it was made a point that “All learners” need to benefit from classes and that whether you have struggling students or advanced students, both need to be getting the same amount out of the class. A struggling student may need more help understanding parts of the content, or an advanced student may know more about a subject than another, but as the teacher, we have to find ways to “differentiate instruction” and focus on getting the whole class involved. I took it to heart when I read about giving the struggling students opportunities to work with the teacher on areas they may be lacking. During times in a class where the students are doing worksheets or working on homework could be a great time to get in touch with the students who may need a little extra explaining. I also like how it emphasized making sure to focus on the important knowledge of a unit and helping them make connections to past years in school rather than going on tangents about information that might not be necessarily “imperative to know”. I would like to focus a lot in practicum on how to engage students who may not generally get involved or helping them to understand things that maybe needs more explaining. I know that growing up I had a hard time getting all the information I needed during class time, but that conversation with teachers and having that one on one interaction and feeling comfortable asking questions was very helpful to me and I hope to be able to have that sort of comfort and relationship with my future students.

Chapter 2

One of my biggest concerns about being a teacher is dealing with situations that happen outside of my classroom. In chapter 2, it starts off by talking about students who have “barriers” or things that distract them or others from learning. It brings up a student who has a hard time getting work done and paying attention in class because her parents got a divorce at the beginning of the school year. Another student does great work in the classroom and contributes in class discussion, but when it comes to getting homework done he rarely completes it or turns it in late because of his commitments outside of school to sports. I foresee it being difficult to make sure all of the students are getting the help and attention they need. Something I wonder is how much guidance counselors converse with teachers about students and how much time there is to talk and get to know students individually during the school day. It’s an important part of me and I hope for it to be a focus in my classroom on really knowing my students and having them know each other. It will be important in the field of health that students are comfortable with the teacher and each other because whether it be sex education or in a gym class, these topics can be nerve racking for some students and as the teacher I want to do everything I can to make them all feel welcome and involved.

Chapter 3

The first sentence of this chapter brings up a big concern I have, “too much content to teach given the available time” (p.24). In health its less about my concern for fitting in everything that the students need to know, but more about making sure I use the time I have to give my students all that they need to know to make smart decisions in their future about their health. It’s important to me that my students not only know what healthy choices are, but that they take the extra step and want to apply what they learn to their own lives as I believe health is the basis for all learning. If you don’t have good health, then you will have a hard time doing other things in life, like focusing in school or doing well in extra curricular activities. I’m excited to continue to take health classes for the remainder of my college career to learn about how to accomplish these sorts of things. Also I’m excited to talk to my mentor teacher about how they set up their curriculum and how they focus in on certain topics of health since there are so many. Another piece that was brought up was “understanding the ‘big ideas’” (p.26). As I noted, there are so many topics under the broad subject of health. In my classroom, I hope to be able to find out what is most important to the age group I’m teaching and be able come up with important and fun subjects to go over throughout the year.

Chapter 4

In the beginning, the book mentions having “few models of how such classrooms would look and little personal experience with the concept”, this makes me thinks back to my high school and middle school days and the type(s) of health classes that I was in. They did not provide me with the proper knowledge I needed about how to have a nutritious diet. That’s something that I will be focusing a lot on in the future because a lot of students don’t know or don’t care about what it means to eat healthy. Having a teacher who cares and models what it means and the importance of keeping your body healthy is crucial when students are growing up so that they can learn early on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle instead of trying to start one as an adult. Also by teaching the students, they can bring what they learn in class back home to their parents and teach them about how to make their home life a healthier one. Helping children to take part in their own success and learning is also another aspect of teaching that I believe is very important. Students need to also be able to know how to find out information for themselves along with being guided by teachers and/or their peers, such as: research projects (individual or group), student led discussions, etc. Making sure the students are getting the information they need is one thing, but there are ways for them to find information and learn other than by word of mouth from their teachers.

Chapter 5

Assessment is a huge part of the student learning process. Without assessments it is hard for us teachers to know how well our students are understanding the material being taught to them. I think an important aspect of assessment that has been brought up in previous chapters along with this one is incorporating the students into everything that goes on within a classroom. The easiest way to find out if a student is getting the material or if they need further help is just to ask them. Obviously it’s crucial to use concrete forms of assessments like testing, projects, things like that, but at the route of all that, the student is the one who truly knows what they need and how they’re doing. I really liked the topic about considering a students understanding and assessments as a “photo album” rather than a “snapshot” (p.60). Collecting information over time is much more affective and informative for a teacher or a parent than testing them over all the material at the end and assuming/expecting them to know everything. Assessment is something that takes time and makes it easier to know where your students are at throughout and to better assist them in areas that they may not fully understand. A lot of teachers don’t do this. I know a lot of times in my English classes, teachers would use a quote section on tests and look for the most random quotes throughout the book that really had no importance to what we were focusing on in the class. Assessment is a tool for students to show they know what they’ve been taught, not to make sure they can memorize every little detail of everything they’ve read or heard in the class.